Welcome Guide

June 2016
I. About the NYC/CUNY Citizenship Now! Volunteer Corps

In 2006, the Volunteer Corps was formally created through a partnership between CUNY Citizenship Now! and the New York City Mayor’s Office for Immigrant Affairs (MOIA) to organize New Yorkers interested in volunteering to help immigrants become U.S. citizens. The Volunteer Corps is a growing community of New Yorkers from all backgrounds who are passionate about immigrants’ rights, immigration law and public service. Among our volunteers are attorneys, paralegals and law students as well as many other committed individuals that thrive on helping others.

By signing up for our Volunteer Corps you gain special access to trainings and opportunities to volunteer at CUNY Citizenship Now! events and centers as well as opportunities to work with partner organizations. Volunteers are most often recruited to assist with bi-monthly citizenship application events, but have also been enlisted to participate in events in response to new immigration developments such as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Temporary Protected Status (TPS). Each spring, we also ask volunteers to join us for the week-long CUNY/Daily News Citizenship NOW! Call-in, where volunteers answer phones and help provide callers with free, confidential information on immigration issues.

By signing up for the CUNY Citizenship Now! Volunteer Corps, you will have the opportunity to:

- Gain hands-on experience and training in the immigration field.
- Assist immigrants in overcoming barriers to naturalization and help them become U.S. citizens.
- Connect with a diverse group of people from all over the world.
- Network with fellow volunteers and CUNY Citizenship Now! staff members.
- Meet many of New York’s influential public officials who co-sponsor events.
- Receive CUNY Citizenship Now! communications, including our event and training invites, our volunteer newsletter and job announcements.
- Earn special recognition from CUNY Citizenship Now! through publication on our Honors List and become eligible to be featured as our Volunteer of the Month.
- Gain leadership experience through roles at our events and trainings or by applying to become a member of our Volunteer Advisory Committee.
- Meet the pro bono requirements for law students and attorneys (see section IV.C.).

II. What We Expect from Volunteers

At CUNY Citizenship Now! we strive to deliver high quality services to our participants, the term we use for those we help. We don’t call them “clients” because we are a pro se assistance project (pro se means ‘on one’s own behalf’). This means we provide information and advice on the law. We assist individuals by answering their immigration questions and helping complete their applications which they then file on their own. We do this at our legal centers and events around the city.
We aim to create an environment that is professional, comfortable and pleasant for everyone. For this reason, we have a few guidelines to ensure a great experience for staff, volunteers and the participants we serve. We ask all volunteers to abide by the rules below and inform us of any irregularities. Please note, volunteers must be 17 years of age or older, unless accompanied by a guardian.

A. Pledge to Maintain Confidentiality

Volunteers are asked to agree to and abide by our Volunteer Confidentiality Agreement when registering for the Volunteer Corps and again when registering for any of our events. Confidentiality is not only a legal obligation, but also a strong value that we promote at Citizenship Now! and one of the reasons participants seek our services. When volunteering at events our volunteers handle personal documents of participants and discuss intensely personal matters. We strive to ensure that all this information remains private. Do not discuss participants’ cases publicly during events or outside of events.

B. Pledge to Not Engage in Unauthorized Practice of Law (UPL)

When you register as a member of the Volunteer Corps, you attest you will not engage in the unauthorized practice of law and that you have not violated New York State or New York City laws limiting the provision of legal services by non-attorneys.

Helping people complete an immigration application, such as the N-400 Application for Naturalization, is the practice of law (UPL). At our events, volunteers complete naturalization applications and fee waiver applications under the supervision of attorneys and Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) accredited representatives, so volunteers are not engaging in UPL. Volunteers should not use participation with the Volunteer Corps to identify themselves as being authorized to practice law. Participation as a volunteer at our events does not authorize non-attorneys to practice law. Please review the Pledge to Not Engage in Unauthorized Practice of Law (UPL) for more detailed information on UPL and what is considered the “practice of law.”

U.S. immigration regulations state that only attorneys licensed in at least one state of the United States who are in good standing and accredited representatives with Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) recognized agencies can “practice law”. If you are an attorney licensed outside the United States and/or you are not licensed and in good standing in at least one of the states of the United States, then you are a non-attorney for purposes of the CUNY Citizenship Now! events.

C. Handling Referrals

CUNY Citizenship Now! aims to provide free services to New Yorkers. For this reason, we mandate that volunteers and staff only refer participants to CUNY Citizenship Now! Immigration Centers, BIA recognized non-profits offering free or low cost immigration services, the New York City Bar Association Legal Referral Panel, or AILA’s Immigration Lawyer Search service. All this information can be provided to participants at our events. Volunteers must not refer participants to themselves, private attorneys or other for-profit service providers.
D. Prohibition on Solicitation

Volunteers are prohibited from distributing solicitation materials such as private business cards in or around the premises of any Citizenship Now! event. The distribution of any solicitation materials and/or information to participants by volunteers is strictly prohibited.

E. Dress Code / Attire

We recommend that volunteers arrive to our events wearing business casual attire. We think our presentation has an impact on the participant’s perception of the quality of the services. Please make sure you wear comfortable footwear, as you might be on your feet throughout the event.

F. Adherence to the CUNY Citizenship Now! Volunteer Corps Guide

Every Volunteer Corps member is required to adhere to the principles and provisions outlined in this guide. This guide was created to avoid misunderstandings between volunteers and Citizenship Now! and to avoid behavior that may compromise either other volunteers, participants and/or the mission and vision of CUNY Citizenship Now!

III. Volunteer Dismissal

CUNY Citizenship Now! reserves the right to dismiss members from the Volunteer Corps for engaging in any of the following:

- Persistent failure to follow guidance from CUNY Citizenship Now! staff members.
- Involvement in any illegal activity.
- Use of alcohol or other inappropriate substances during an event.
- Use of discriminatory or racist statements or behaviors.
- Sexual harassment, including jokes, innuendos, insults, sexist remarks, the display of inappropriate photographs or material, leering, touching or kissing.
- Acceptance of money or gifts from CUNY Citizenship Now! participants for immigration services. This prohibition remains in force both during and after volunteering with CUNY Citizenship Now!
- Failure to follow CUNY Citizenship Now! policies and practice standards as set forth in this guide.

IV. CUNY Citizenship Now! Event Guidelines

A. Before the Event

Volunteer Corps Registration

Anyone can sign up for the NYC/CUNY Citizenship Now! Volunteer Corps on our website (cuny.edu/citizenshipnow/volunteer). By registering through this link, you are agreeing to receive our regular email communications.

Event and Training Registration

After registering for the Volunteer Corps, you will begin to receive email invitations for trainings and events. These invitations are generally sent out two weeks ahead of time and include registration links. All volunteers are required to sign-up for our events in advance.
Corps members primarily help at our free citizenship application assistance events, which are held two Saturdays per month throughout the five boroughs. While you are not required to go to a training in order to attend an event, our trainings will help expand your knowledge and allow you to participate in a wider range of roles at our events. Trainings are typically held on one weekday evening per month.

For Saturday events, registration generally closes on the Wednesday morning before. This is so we can assign volunteers to the various event stations based on work experience, knowledge of immigration issues, languages spoken, trainings attended and our needs for the day. If registration is closed for an event, do not worry; you will receive an email invitation to our future events as they become available.

Please email cunycitizenshipnow@gmail.com if you are having difficulties registering for an event.

**Event Information and Materials**

An event materials email is sent to all volunteers, typically the day before an event. This email includes station assignments, announcements and basic information about our events. In case you miss the email, the station assignments are also listed on the volunteer sign-in sheet and nametags at the event.

**Cancellation**

If for any reason you are no longer able to attend an event please notify us 24 hours in advance. To cancel your registration email us at cunycitizenshipnow@gmail.com.

**B. During the Event**

We ask all volunteers to arrive at the event before we open the doors to the public. Your arrival time is indicated in the event confirmation you receive after you sign up for an event and in the “materials” email you receive the day before an event.

Please make sure to sign-in upon arrival to the event. This is important so we are able to track your participation for our records and in the event that you need confirmation of your volunteer time. We serve light refreshments and provide a brief orientation on event procedures before the event, so make sure you arrive on time!

After signing-in and participating in orientation, you should go to your assigned station as noted on the sign-in sheet and your nametag. The station supervisors will go over the tasks you will be performing and will answer any questions you may have.
C. Pro-Bono Hours

For lawyers or law students interested in fulfilling official NY State pro-bono requirements through volunteering with CUNY Citizenship Now! please read below:

At events, please remember to sign in and out on the volunteer sign-in sheet. This will help us confirm your pro-bono hours later on. If you are planning to attend more than one citizenship event, please wait until your last pro-bono event with us to request our information and signature for the affidavit. If you are only planning to attend one event with us, or have certain extenuating circumstances, please communicate this to our Volunteer Coordinator.

Once you have “completed” your hours with us, please follow the steps below:

1. Email our Volunteer Coordinator with the event dates on which you participated so that we may confirm your hours and the supervising attorney’s information.
2. Complete page one of “FORM AFFIDAVIT AS TO APPLICANT’S COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRO BONO REQUIREMENTS.”
3. Have your signature notarized.
4. Turn your affidavit in to our Volunteer Coordinator at an event OR mail the form to the Citizenship Now! Central Administrative Office (101 W. 31st Street, 9th Floor, Suite 900, New York, NY 10001).
5. A supervising attorney will sign the form.
6. You can pick up the signed form at our Central Administrative Office (address above) or we can mail the form to you at the address provided on your affidavit.
7. Finally, we hope that you will continue to volunteer with us after the completion of your official pro-bono hours!

V. FOLLOW-UP

- To ensure that you receive emails from us, make sure to add cunycitizenshipnow@gmail.com to your e-mail address book.
- We want your experience to be as pleasant as possible. If you have any ideas, suggestions or complaints, send us a comment to our Suggestion Box or via email to cunycitizenshipnow@gmail.com.
- See photos of volunteers in action and remember to “like” us on Facebook and follow us on Instagram
- If you or a family member would like to be helped at one of our citizenship events, please call 646-664-9400 to make an appointment. You can also make an appointment to be assisted with a variety of immigration issues at one of our legal centers or Council Member locations (contact information is available on our website, cuny.edu/citizenshipnow).

Thanks for volunteering with CUNY Citizenship Now!

www.cuny.edu/citizenshipnow/volunteer

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